It was not until the modern age that the Occident, enriched by its geographic discoveries and its industrial revolution, forged ahead of China and set a new standard of comfort for the race.

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the majority of the Chinese have lived and continue to live at an economic level which to the modern Occident seems grinding poverty, that even in good times there have been thousands of professional beggars, that again and again throughout China's history famines have devastated great sections (one estimate shows an average for two thousand years of nearly one famine a year which was important enough to find a place in the records), and that at several periods gigantic declines in population seem to have occurred and must have been accompanied by intense physical suffering. Much of this distress, to be sure, has been due primarily to other factors than economic. Floods and drought, the collapse of dynasties with the attendant civil strife, invasions, high mortality in youth, wasting disease, religious beliefs, and a family system which makes for the rapid multiplication of population, each has had a part. But for defects in the economic structure, however, there would probably have been fewer rebellions, for many of these were in large part induced by the pinch of poverty, and a better organization or a greater control of man's physical environment would have prevented or mitigated the distress due to disasters of nature. It is significant that the mechanical inventions which have made possible the increases both in population and in standards of living in so much of the world during the past century and a half originated not in China but in the Occident.

The reasons must be a matter of debate, but the

fact is indisputable. The Chinese, with all their devotion to the material well-being of man, fell behind the West in achieving it.

AGRICULTURE

From time immemorial agriculture has been the major occupation of the Chinese. It is estimated that eighty-five per cent, of the population are now engaged in it. This figure is far from exact, and if it is put that high it must be made to include allied occupations—such as merchants, traders, artisans, blacksmiths, restaurant-keepers, and the like in the villages and market towns, and the many who help to transport farm produce from the fields